

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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R 021350Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8596

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 1883

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, PINS, CB, CH, FR

SUBJECT: KHIEU SAMPHAN'S VISIT

REF: STATE 088017; BUCHAREST 1870

1. DURING A CALL BY THE AMBASSADOR AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY ON OTHER MATTERS, DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER NICOLAE GHENEA MADE SEVERAL COMMENTS ON THE VISIT TO ROMANIA OF CAMBODIAN GRUNK LEADER, KHIEU SAMPHAN. HE SAID THE ROMANIAN IMPRESSION WAS THAT THE KHIEU SAMPHAN GROUP WAS "NOT RADICAL" AND WAS ORIENTED TOWARD CAMBODIAN NATIONALISM. HE CITED THE FACT THAT KHIEU SAMPHAN PROPOSED HIS TOASTS IN CAMBODIAN RATHER THAN FRENCH AS AN EXAMPLE OF THIS NATIONALISM. THE GRUNK LEADERS WANTED TO FORM A NATIONAL UNITY FRONT OPEN TO ALL SECTORS OF CAMBODIAN OPINION BUT WOULD NOT DEAL WITH LON NOL BECAUSE THE LATTER HAD BECOME A POLITICAL SYMBOL OF TREASON, AND OF WHAT THEY WERE OPPOSING. THE GRUNK GROUP WOULD CONTINUE ITS MILITARY ACTIONS BUT WAS PREPARED TO FIND A POLITICAL SOLUTION. THE PRESENT TRIP WAS A CLEAR INDICATION OF ITS WILLINGNESS TO THINK POLITICALLY. WHEN THE AMBASSADOR

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NOTED THAT THE CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT IN PHNOM PENH HAD

MADE PROPOSALS FOR TALKS, GHENEA REPLIED THAT SIGNALS HAD NOT BEEN GOOD ENOUGH. A BETTER SIGNAL WAS CALLED FOR AND GHENEA INDICATED HIS CONVICTION THAT FURTHER AND CONTINUING EFFORTS AT ESTABLISHING CONTACT SHOULD BE MADE, SINCE HE WAS SURE A "GOOD" SIGNAL WOULD BE HEARD. ON FAULT OF THE "SIGNAL" GIVEN BY PHNOM PENH WAS THAT IT WAS BASED ON THE CONTINUED LEADERSHIP OF LON NOL. GHENA ALSO REFERRED AT ONE POINT TO "FIVE OR SIX PEOPLE" IN THE LON NOL GROUP INCLUDING SIRIK MATAK WHO WERE IDENTIFIED WITH LON NOL. WHILE HE DID NOT SPECIFICALLY SAY THEY WOULD HAVE TO BE EXCLUDED, THERE WAS SUCH AN IMPRESSION LEFT. ON THE OTHER HAND HE SAID IT WAS CLEAR TO HIM THAT THE GRUNK WAS PREPARED TO WORK OUT A POLITICAL SOLUTION WITH SOME OF THOSE NOW CONNECTED WITH THE LON NOL GOVERNMENT, IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE CAMBODIAN PEOPLE COULD DECIDE THEIR FUTURE FOR THEMSELVES.

2. GHENEA NOTED THE IN-COUNTRY NATURE OF THE GROUP AND IMPLIED THE TENUOUSNESS OF ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH SIHANOUK, ALTHOUGH HE SAID SAMPHAN REFERRED BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY TO SIHANOUK AS THE LEADER OF GRUNK. HE NOTED THAT ALTHOUGH SIHANOUK HAD MADE HIS CELEBRATED TRIP TO CAMBODIA A YEAR OR SO AGO, HIS ABSENCE FROM THE COUNTRY MADE HIM SUBJECT TO CRITICISM AND ESTRANGEMENT AND AT ONE POINT HE REFERRED TO THE IN-COUNTRY GROUP'S RELATIONS WITH SIHANOUK "FOR SUCH TIME" AS IT HOLDS.

3. WHEN AN EFFORT WAS MADE TO PROBE SOVIET AND CHINESE TIES, GHENEA FIRST MERELY NOTED THEIR RECOGNITION OF GRUNK AND WILLINGNESS TO GO AHEAD WITH ITS PROGRAM, BUT ALSO COMMENTED ON THE FACT THAT MOSCOW WAS NOT A STOP ON THE SAMPHAN ITINERARY AND THAT SAMPHAN WOULD STOP IN PEKING AGAIN AT THE END OF THE TRIP, ALL OF THIS SHOWING CLEAR CHINESE SUPPORT OF THE IN-COUNTRY GROUP. WHEN NORTH VIETNAM WAS MENTIONED, GHENEA WAS CAREFUL TO DENY KNOWLEDGE OF ANY NVN TROOPS IN THE COUNTRY AND AVOIDED ANY DIRECT COMMENT ON NVN-KHMER ROUGE RELATIONS (EXCEPT

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TO INSIST ON THE "CAMBODIAN" ORIENTATION OF GRUNK AND TO SAY THAT ANY OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE IN CAMBODIAN AFFAIRS SHOULD CEASE.

4. HE SAID KHIEU SAMPHAN WOULD LEAVE MAY 2 FOR ALGIERS AND THAT A COMMUNIQUE WOULD BE ISSUED WHICH HE RECOMMENDED WE STUDY AS IT WOULD BE POSITIVE FROM A U.S. STANDPOINT.

5. KHIEM SAMPHAN SAT BETWEEN CEAUSESCU AND ELENA CEAUSESCU AT MAY DAY CEREMONY AND COULD BE OBSERVED BY AMBASSADOR AND DCM FROM DISTANCE OF ABOUT 50 FEET. HE LOOKED YOUNG, PERHAPS 35, AND HAD BABY FACE, EVEN FOR A CAMBODIAN. HIS HAIR WAS CLOSE-CROPPED AND DARK WITHOUT ANY TRACE OF GRAY VISIBLE. HE WAS ABOUT SAME HEIGHT AS CEAUSESCU (ABOUT 5 FT 4 IN). ALTHOUGH CEAUSESCU'S FRENCH INTERPRETER CAME UP AND SAT BEHIND KHIEM AFTER HIS ARABIC INTERPRETER TOOK INITIATIVE TO SIT BEHIND SYRIAN VICE-PREMIER ON CEAUSESCU'S LEFT, KHIEM SAMPHAN DID NOT EXCHANGE ONE WORD WITH EITHER CEAUSESCU OR HIS WIFE DURING ENTIRE CEREMONY OF MORE THAN HOUR AND HALF. ALTHOUGH PRESENCE OF FRENCH INTERPRETER IMPLIED SOME KNOWLEDGE OF FRENCH BY KHIEM SAMPHAN, HIS FAILURE TO SPEAK (DESPITE FREQUENT "VISITS" BETWEEN PARTY SECRETARY BURTICA AND TO LESSER EXTENT CIOARA AND BODNARAS WITH CEAUSESCU, SOMETIMES OVER KHIEM'S SHOULDERS) CAST DOUBT ON HIS KNOWLEDGE OF FRENCH AS WELL AS HIS ABILITY TO CARRY OFF MINIMUM SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS HOSTS. IN CONTRAST, CEAUSESCU DID SPEAK ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, THOUGH BRIEFLY, WITH HIS SYRIAN GUEST.

6. EMBASSY WILL REPORT F
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